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DEPT FOR OES/SAT AND EUR/WE (ADAMS/FETCHKO)
NASA HQ FOR A.D. SOFGE AND T.JENS FEELEY, PARIS FOR NASA
REP DR. J.DON MILLER, DEPT. PLEASE PASS TO NSF

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ITALIAN NGO PROPOSES NEW COLLABORATION TO REALIZE
"MOON BASE ITALIA"

1. This is an action request. Please see paragraph 2.

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST:

2. On March 4, Embassy Economic and Science officers met with an Italian NGO planning a meeting in Venice on May 26-27, 2005 to explore possible U.S.-Italian-EU-Russian cooperation to design and construct a manned base on the moon. The NGO, "Solidarity and Development," claims to enjoy political support from members of the government, the Italian scientific research community, and the powerful defense industrial conglomerate, Finmeccanica. Following the May invitation-only meeting to present the initiative and discuss feasibility, Solidarity and Development proposes holding a follow-on meeting in Washington in October to refine technical requirements and agree on a way forward. ACTION REQUEST: Please advise whether NASA or other USG agency representative would be interested in attending the May 26-27 meeting in Venice, or otherwise exploring this initiative further. Please see comment, para 11. Embassy Rome POC information is in para 12. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

3. On March 4, Economic and Science officers met with Francesco Mazzuca, President of "Solidarity and Development," a technology and innovation NGO founded in 2001 to develop and present action proposals to policymakers on a broad range of issues affecting modern society. Mazzuca, a high-ranking advisor in the powerful defense industrial conglomerate, Finmeccanica, claims to enjoy Prime Minister Berlusconi's patronage for the initiative in the form of support from his diplomatic adviser, Giovanni Castellaneta. (NOTE: In fact, we agreed to a meeting at the Embassy at the specific request of one of Castellaneta's deputies. END NOTE) Mazzuca has contacted the head of the Italian Space Agency (ASI), the Minister of Education, Universities and Research, Letizia Moratti, and influential scientific researchers about the project. Dr. Walter Pecorella, Vice President of the National Institute of Astrophysics, accompanied Mazzuca to the Embassy meeting.

REVITALIZING U.S.-ITALY SPACE COOPERATION:

- "MOON BASE ITALIA"

4. Mazzuca explained that Solidarity and Development's proposal builds on Italy's world-class national and international space program, noted for successes such as the San Marco satellite and participation in the International Space Station and the Cassini-Huygens Saturn mission. Inspired by President Bush's Space Exploration Vision Program and High Frontier, Inc. Director Klaus P. Heiss' draft paper "A Moonbase of Observatories," Solidarity and Development wants to launch an ambitious international space exploration proposal to revitalize Italy's special relationship with the United States and maintain Italy's status as a major contributor to international space exploration missions. Identifying new areas for cooperation would also stimulate Italian research and industrial activities, and the funding to make them happen, something Italy badly needs to reverse declining economic competitiveness and the sliding GDP growth rate (1.2 percent in 2004). Solidarity and Development proposes to hold two invitation-only workshops for Italian, U.S., European, and Russian scientists and government representatives to discuss how to form an international effort to construct a manned base on the moon. They have named the initiative "Moon Base Italia."

VENICE MEETING MAY 26-27

5. Solidarity and Development will sponsor a two-day invitation-only workshop for 130 participants to present the "Moon Base Italia" initiative and identify areas critical to mission success. Most of the speakers would be American and Italian, but participants would also come from

Europe and Russia, primarily to listen. This first meeting would seek to define the "take-off point" for the proposal

and elicit any "objections in principle" to moving forward. Selected government and industry representatives and scientists would address the following areas:

- The type of base to design;
- The type of transportation system to use;
- The relationship between the moon base and other solar system exploration programs, including how the project would impact on the International Space Station operations;
- Technical microsystems necessary for the mission;
- Scientific and experimental objectives and activities to pursue on the moon, along with anticipated technological and industrial spin-offs; and
- Preliminary economic considerations.

16. Solidarity and Development, together with American representatives, if they are interested, would organize the May workshop and choose the speakers. The Europeans and Russians would participate on "technical matters." The Venice meeting would seek to define a cooperative structure among the United States, the EU, and Russia, in which Italy would have a coordinating role to implement the project. Three committees would be formed (Steering, Scientific, and Organizing Committees). Mazzuca provided only a sketchy idea of who would be represented on the committees, but we noted he had included USG agencies in his preliminary suggestion for Steering Committee participation.

WASHINGTON FOLLOW-ON MEETINGS IN OCTOBER ?

17. Solidarity and Development also proposes a two-day, follow-on workshop in Washington in October, 2005. Italy and the United States would organize the meeting and choose the speakers. The Washington workshop would review the findings of the Venice meetings, answer any "objections on principle" expressed in May, and settle on a way forward in all the critical areas: technical, organizational and political. Mazzuca noted that Solidarity and Development would work with the Italian Embassy and Finmeccanica's Washington office on meeting logistics.

INSPIRATION FROM U.S. DRAFT PROPOSAL

18. Mazzuca has been in contact with Klaus P. Heiss, Director of High Frontier, Inc., and author of a major economic feasibility study for the ISS in 1971. In response to President Bush's Space Exploration Vision, Heiss has written a draft document entitled "A Moonbase of Observatories: The First Sustained Human Base Outside Earth at the South Pole of the Moon by 2020 with Private and International Participation." This appears to be the inspiration for "Moon Base Italia." The draft recommends that the USG (NASA) establish a "Lunar Enterprise Development Company" on the Intelsat model, to attract substantial private sector participation in all technological and scientific activities of the project.

UNCERTAIN ROLES FOR ITALIAN/EUROPEAN - SPACE AGENCIES

19. Emboffs queried Mazzuca on the Italian Space Agency's participation in "Moon Base Italia." He replied that ASI would certainly have a role, and that he had spoken with ASI President Dr. Sergio Vetrrella to urge ASI involvement. Mazzuca also assured us that he had spoken personally with the head of the European Space Agency (ESA), but that Italy intends to take the lead to move the proposal forward rapidly, rather than rely on the more time-consuming ESA process.

POLITICAL BACKING AND FUNDING

10. The deputy to Berlusconi's diplomatic advisor emphasized that Mazzuca is well connected politically with the Union of Christian Democrats of the Center (UDC), the small centrist partner in the government coalition. Mazzuca is science and technology advisor to both Marco Follini, UDC Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister, and to

Rocco Buttiglione, UDC President and the Minister for European Union Policies. Mazzuca himself expressed confidence during our meeting that, if the initiative went forward, "Moon Base Italia" implementers would have the political backing to secure GOI funding in the form of "ad hoc" appropriations to the general budget. There is precedent for this in recent years. Extra-budgetary funding has supported Italian participation in the Cassini-

Huygens Saturn mission and the ALMA (the Atacama Large Millimeter Array) Project, an international partnership among the United States National Science Foundation, Canada, Spain, and the European Southern Observatory to construct the world's largest and most sensitive radio telescope in Chile.

COMMENT

11. Emboffs were not familiar with Solidarity and Development until Mazzuca was referred to us by the Prime Minister's office -- not a bad introduction. However, given Mazzuca's political ties to one of the partners in the government, and based on his management position in Finmeccanica, we believe his NGO's effort to stimulate discussion of a possible role for Italy in the next stages of U.S.-led international space exploration is serious and deserves consideration. END COMMENT.

12. Embassy welcomes contact with the Department, NASA or other USG agencies interested in this proposal. Rome POC is EST Counselor Jill Byrnes, at unclassified e-mail "ByrnesJF(at symbol)state.gov. Telephone: (country code 39) 06-4674-2691. Fax: (39) 06-4674-2398. SEMBLER

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